



Gate City Immigrant Initiative
January 25, 2017
9:00AM – 10:30AM
Nashua City Hall Auditorium

Gate City Immigrant Initiative is a subcommittee of the Nashua Cultural Connections Committee.

Present: Sylvia Gale, Mark Hastbacka, Becky Field, Donna Marceau, Yoly Rivero-Lara, Katelyn Gagnon, Pastor Richard Cullen, Adelina Hernandez, Sandi Cotter, Vivian Karian, Kim Kleiner, Jen McCormack, Aseeb Niazi, Shayana Owen, Samba Halkose, Jason Wakefield, Max Gonzales, Iris Cora, Jenn Hosking (co-chair), Lauren Osowski (co-chair)

Commenced at 9:00AM

Introductions

Co-Chair Updates:

Parking passes for the 2017 calendar year will be distributed to regular those that attend these meetings regularly. The passes should be used only for Gate City Immigrant Initiative business and authorize parking in the Elm Street Garage on the pay station level. Please turn in any 2016 parking passes so they can be returned to the City.

The welcoming table set up in the community room of the Main St Methodist Church during the Winter Holiday Stroll was a success. With the help of One Greater Nashua we were able to offer international treats to community members as we shared our welcoming message. Behind the table we shared a couple of welcome Nashua videos as well as a slide show of pictures from the Adult Learning Center. Pastor Cullen stated the church is happy to provide the group space at the 2017 holiday stroll, but the location may be different since they will be under renovation in part of the building.

Jenn Hosking shared her experience attending a public presentation by UNH GATE CITY participants. Students, many of whom were Nashua educators, presented their advocacy projects as a capstone to the course Language and Culture in Schools and Schooling. Topics included encouraging students to self-advocate, initiating intercultural communication with parents, getting ELL students excited about science, assisting with the transition from Head Start to kindergarten for parents of Nashua ELL students and improved communication techniques with ELL families.

Lauren invited the committee to brainstorm possible themes for the 2017 Gate City Immigrant Initiative Symposium to be held in the fall. One suggestion is a breakout session focused on

misconceptions about why refugees are resettled. It was agreed that some personal stories to help others understand the struggle would be valuable. Another idea was to do more outreach to the business community to draw them to the event. The Nashua Chamber of Commerce is interested in participating on the planning committee. Another suggestion was to contact the Southern Poverty Law Center to provide tools for teaching tolerance. The group discussed the intended audience for the symposium, is it immigrants and refugees, service providers, general public? No conclusion was made. It was generally accepted that a theme of “Nashua is Welcoming” should be pursued and that it fits in well with the City’s welcoming legislation passed in the fall. Committee members interested in participating on the planning committee were asked to indicate so on the sign in sheet. Participation on the planning committee will require attendance at meetings outside of the monthly GCII meetings.

One Greater Nashua:

Cultural Navigators

Jen McCormack announced the current recruitment for the second class of cultural navigators. Changes have been made to the training that will start in April. It will only be five sessions long. The Coffee and Conversation program held at the library on the third Thursday of the month has been a success with 20 people regularly attending. It has been a mix of 40% newcomers and 60% receiving community. The gaming program held on Monday nights is on hold during tax season because the space is being used by the AARP tax help volunteers. Beginning February 1st volunteers will be at the library Monday and Wednesday 10-7pm and Friday 10-2pm to provide free tax assistance to low income residents and seniors. This is primarily a drop in service but some appointments can be made by going to the library’s website www.nashualibrary.org or calling 2-1-1. When the Chandler Wing renovation is completed at the library, navigators will have regular hours in one of the study rooms to provide community members assistance with questions about our culture and practices.

Community update:

Pastor Richard Cullen mentioned the Main St Methodist Church still has some winter clothes from a clothing drive organized at the church. They are happy to share these clothes with anyone in need. The church has had success with their model of the church “adopting” a couple of refugee families to walk them through the period of assimilation to our community. He asked if others are doing a similar match program. Ascentria uses this model with their volunteers and IINE is currently trialing this model. Any families interested in being matched with a refugee family should contact Sandi Cotter at Ascentria or Katelyn Gagnon at IINE.

Donna Marceau from the Nashua Soup Kitchen and Shelter shared that Friday, January 27th, Lisa Christie’s years of service to the organization will be celebrated at the Crowne Plaza from 4 to 7pm. All are welcome.

Kim Kleiner shared the work the Mayor’s office is currently doing to let citizens know the good that is being done around the city in support of the Welcoming City legislation approved in the fall of 2016. The City is creating a website that will be accessible from nashuanh.gov that provides links to community services offered. They are also reviewing how policies adopted by the school district and police department can be made more welcoming. A Citizen’s Academy is also currently in development to introduce community members to different departments and

services available in the city. The first class will run in the spring for 12-13 weeks, registration is required through the city's website. A second class will run in the fall.

Resettlement Agency:

International Institute of New England (IINE):

Katelyn Gagnon reported that IINE is at 55% of its capacity for this fiscal year. December was a busy month, January will a little slower. One new family of four is set to arrive in Nashua from Thailand. Due to low staffing, she was unable to report on the breakdown of families settled in December or the projections for the coming months.

	FY16 Totals	FY17 to Date
DRC/Congo	73 (Nashua = 11)	44 (Nashua = 8)
Burma	32 (all Nashua)	13 (all Nashua)
Iraq	34 (all Manchester)	12 (all Manchester)
Syria	9 (all Manchester)	7 (all Manchester)
Somalia	44 (all Manchester)	4 (all Manchester)
Bhutan	27 (all Manchester)	27 (all Manchester)
Burundi	7 (all Manchester)	9 (all Manchester)
Ukraine	2 (all Manchester)	
Sudan	1 (all Manchester)	
El Salvador		1 (all Nashua)
Afghan		2 (all Manchester)
TOTAL	229	

Ascentria Care Alliance:

Sandi Cotter reported in the month of December 24 refugees were resettled in NH mostly from Congo, a couple from Burma and Bhutan. Nineteen people were resettled in Nashua including 14 from the Congo and 5 from Burma. In January 10 refugees have been resettled so far, 4 from the Congo and 6 from Burma, all in Nashua. There is a travel moratorium for the first week of January so the numbers are a little lower. They are also having some housing issues in Concord and are therefore settling more people in Nashua.

	December 2016	January 2017
DRC/Congo	15 (Nashua = 14)	4 (all Nashua)
Burma	5 (all Nashua)	6 (all Nashua)
Bhutan	4 (all Concord)	-
TOTAL	24	10

Next meeting: Wednesday 02/22/17 from 9:00AM-10:30AM at Nashua City Hall - Auditorium

Respectfully Submitted,

Jenn Hosking